

ADELIA HOYT
PIONEER DIRECTOR OF
BRAILLE SERVICE RETIRES

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Pioneer Director of Braille Service ^{cop. 1} RETIRES



Adelia M. Hoyt, who retires as National Director of Braille

BRAILLISTS over the nation will no longer receive bulletins and letters with the familiar signature of Miss Adelia M. Hoyt. On May 1st she began a well-earned rest, as on that day her retirement from the post of Assistant, Service for the Blind at the Library of Congress, and also as director of the Red Cross Braille Service, became effective.

This does not mean that Miss Hoyt will no longer devote herself, as an avocation, to continued sympathetic interest in the Red Cross braille program. She has pledged her efforts to continued volunteer service. But active control of the Red Cross program will be in the hands of her successor at the Library, Miss Alice Rohrback.

Twenty years ago Miss Hoyt began her work for the Red Cross as the first volunteer in an embryo service for the blinded soldiers who were being returned home from the World War. The Chicago Chapter, under Miss Madeleine S. Loomis, had organized Braille service for the blind and was carrying on this work. In the Library of Congress existed a small service for the blind, of which Mrs. Gertrude Rider was director; and soon Miss Hoyt

was made the second member of this staff. With the cooperation of our National Director of Volunteer Service, Miss Mabel T. Boardman, the first Red Cross braille classes were organized—five classes. They met in the evening and were composed of government war workers. Thus began a program which has since enlisted thousands of men and women volunteers in one of the most sympathetic tasks to which one can devote oneself—bringing reading matter to the nation's sightless.

In the intervening two decades, Miss Hoyt has had the gratification of seeing this service grow out of the bounds of the room assigned her service on the ground floor of the Library of Congress, until today many libraries are devoted to housing the collection.

"Red Cross braillists all over the country have made this possible," Miss Hoyt said. "We have had our problems, but our volunteer workers have never failed in sympathetic cooperation. Gradually we have directed the program into the paths of greatest good and efficiency. For instance, in years ago we accepted most any book that any person desired to braille, but now all of this effort is carefully directed, and a committee passes upon the titles.

"As for my own personal pleasure in the work that we have done, I have found it to be most intense in the books brailled for students, because I remember my own childhood and school days as a blind student. Through our volunteer Red Cross workers, we are now able to furnish books in many languages, including textbooks of the most difficult type, for girls and boys so that they may finish their college courses with success. These books are all returned to the Library, so that they may be available to other students."

The Library of Congress also has an appropriation of \$100,000 a year to expend for press-brailled books. This is coordinated with the Service for the Blind, so



Blind cooks demonstrate braille cook book at Brooklyn, N. Y.

that hand braillists will not spend their time in writing books which may be purchased by the Library from the braille presses. For instance, the popular novel "Gone With the Wind," through the Braille press, was available to the sightless readers in the early days of its great popularity. The Library purchased a number of the 12-volume sets. "Anthony Adverse" was not press-brailled, however, but two hand-copied sets are available (one in the Detroit Library), made by a Red Cross volunteer. It is in 30 volumes.

As with the generality of libraries, the chief demand on the braille libraries is for fiction. Zane Grey, Temple Bailey, and all popular novelists, detective stories, biography, history—all are found in the raised dot books. But the more sophisticated writers are not omitted. Red Cross braillists supply books on various movements, cultures, and so on.

Cook books, fancy-work patterns, law books, music, basketry, playing cards, greeting cards—all are made by volunteers and circulated to the libraries everywhere in the nation, and many are made for individual gifts.

The New York Chapter brailled and duplicated on its efficient press a radio amateur's handbook, which ran into seven volumes. Although not generally known, a great number of the "ham" or amateur radio owners and operators are blind people, and thus this book met a great popular demand. The Library of Congress purchased 54 copies of the New York Chapter's book for its collection.

The District of Columbia Chapter recently press-brailled a radio index, which has had wide circulation.

Miss Hoyt also mentions how helpful the book-binding activities of many Red Cross Chapters have proved.

Today a staff of five blind and three sighted assistants will carry on under Miss Rohrback's direction the program which Miss Hoyt has so ably organized in the Library's Service for the Blind, and in the Red Cross. Miss Rohrback, a graduate of Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind, holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Hood College and also took special courses at Perkins Institute for the Blind at Watertown, Mass., and at Harvard. She has been assistant director to Miss Hoyt for a year, and for ten years had served as a Red Cross braille proof-reader.

Miss Boardman writes this tribute about Miss Hoyt for her devoted service in the Red Cross:

"Many problems she has had to deal with, and she has always been of the greatest assistance to the Red Cross in solving difficulties as well as inspiring our volunteers to carry on and continue their work of transcribing for the blind. All of those who have worked with her have enjoyed this privilege, and the Red Cross desires to express to Miss Hoyt its deep appreciation of the devoted service that she has contributed to this department of its volunteer work."

Miss Hoyt is a national figure in her special field. "Lavender and old lace, rare Dresden china and



Miss Alice Rohrback, in charge of our service to the blind

delicate mosaic combined and impersonated in one vibrant human entity"—thus an admirer describes Miss Hoyt in a book on personalities in the world of sightless people.

How will this "vibrant human entity" spend her days, now that a grateful Red Cross and U. S. Government has granted retirement?

"A busman's holiday first," she said. "I shall read many of these braille books, which I have not had time to read in these years that I have been surrounded by them. Then I shall reread many favorites.

"A Red Cross friend asked me if I played cards, and when I said I'd never had time to learn, she presented me with a pack of brailled cards and said she would teach me solitaire. So I shall sit out on my sun porch, and play solitaire a little, read a little, listen to the radio, and have time for my writing. I hope to write a history of braille transcribing. Then there is music, the theatre, and always my friends of the Red Cross with whom I wish to keep in touch."

Miss Hoyt and her sister and a housekeeper have a charming home on Capitol Hill, near Lincoln Park, Washington. They have three porches, flowers in the yard, and five radios. The good wishes of thousands of Red Cross volunteers attend her in her retirement.

Downpours Swell Southern Rivers

Heavy rains gave the Red Cross uneasiness over conditions in Alabama and eastern Mississippi early in April. In Alabama, the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers overran their banks; and in Mississippi the Pearl, Leaf, Chickasawhay and Pascagoula Rivers flooded the lowlands and forced out about a thousand families, who received Red Cross aid. In Alabama, almost as many families were moved from Montgomery, Wetumpka and Selma during the crisis. However, the rains subsided at a time when a major disaster was threatening, enabling the refugees to return to their homes.

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